BOOK REVIEWS

"**Beyond the Brain**, by Stanislav Grof, published by State University of New York Press, 1985, US $10.95

The blurb on the back of this American edition is very mild and restrained. But the blurb on my French edition, published in 1984, contains what seem like wild hyperboles: "There has been Freud, Adler, Rank, Reich and Jung; henceforth there is Grof . . . An astonishing synthesis of the partial visions of these predecessors . . . The most important work since Freud's 'Introduction to Psychoanalysis' ".

And yet it is so. The blurb tallies entirely with my conviction that this book will become a revered classic of transpersonal psychology.

Grof's previous books have provided detailed reports from some of the 3,000 LSD therapy sessions he has conducted. I have always admired his work, partly as evidence that a man who admits to having taken many acid trips himself can remain in perfect control of his rational faculties. But 'Beyond the Brain' continues on into Grof's post-LSD work using breathing therapy, although containing few detailed session reports. Its importance lies rather in the theoretical framework that he painstakingly builds up over hundreds of pages, carefully undermining the 'paradigms' of present-day science and psychiatry, and summarising the findings of all the most advanced workers in these fields.

His conclusions are conveyed in striking imagery: humans are analogous to the dual wave-particle nature of light; they can appropriately be perceived either as having access to cosmic expanses of consciousness, or as being merely physical bodies and brains. Science and psychiatry are trapped in the latter belief. Neurologists looking at a patient's brain, for instance, are like TV engineers, who diagnose a faulty part so as to correct the malfunction. But unlike TV engineers, neurologists make the mistake of believing that the programme originates within the receiver. Grof challenges this: the mind is not contained in the brain. Consciousness is transpersonal; the universe itself is an infinite web of adventures in consciousness, resembling more a system of thought processes than the gigantic clockwork of mechanistic science.

Grof describes neuroses and psychoses as the 'interface noise' between these two 'wave-particle' aspects of humans - the symptoms of mental illness are the conflict between these two different ways in which humans can experience themselves, either as separate material objects and

biological machines, or as manifesting the properties of vast fields of consciousness that transcend space, time and causality. So, for instance, for Grof and his clients, post-LSD sex can be experienced as "oceanic", a merging and fusion, with genital orgasm no longer central, but simply a way of "removing biological noise from a spiritual system".

Grof reviews sympathetically the works of many of the giants of psychotherapy, showing how their insights are appropriate to particular levels of the psyche, but inadequate as comprehensive explanations. Thus besides the fact that Freud failed to recognise that past physical traumas tend to have a more formative influence than psychological traumas, Freud also failed to acknowledge the central importance of birth traumas - the cataclysmic acting out of the life and death struggle in the birth canal seems to Grof a more satisfactory explanation for human genocidal cruelty than inadequate Freudian theories of childhood trauma.

Jungian therapy on the other hand, Grof points out, whilst pioneering in the transpersonal fields, fails to deal effectively with the psychosomatic elements of a client's condition; whilst Assagioli ignores the dark side of the psyche.

Grof's overall message is that the architecture of psychopathology is infinitely more intricate and ramified than appears in any of these previous models; and what psychiatry defines as distinct diagnostic categories of mental illness are merely stages of a transformative process in which the client has become arrested.

The briefest section of this 446 pagebook is unfortunately the one where Grof describes his new non-LSD 'holonomic therapy' for encouraging clients through the transformative process. I hope that in due course Grof will publish case studies and details of this therapy, which still seems to be of a relatively primitive stage of development. Nevertheless, whereas the average Freudian analyst will see a mere 80 clients in a lifetime, in Grof's holonomic therapy 20 clients in a group can make substantial breakthroughs in one three hour session. In one version of the therapy, the clients hyperventilate forcefully for about 45 minutes, whilst carefully selected music is played. This induces many experiences, including often the reliving of birth; and afterwards the sessions' experiences are 'integrated' using a variety of methods, including the pointing of mandalas.

But Grof stresses that many different in-depth experiential therapies work well together as an eclectic cocktail, for otherwise a client "soon learns the languages and codes: after a while it becomes possible to play the therapy game and move through the process essentially untouched". The most powerful instruments of peronality transformation that Grof has witnessed, apart from LSD therapy, have been the four week sessions that he and his wife Christina organised at Esalen, which combined concept-stretching lectures by eminent people, with emotionally evocative slide shows and

films, intense body work, mineral hot springs, ritual ceremonies and holonomic therapy. He is convinced that this kind of marathon commitment to self-exploration for a limited period of time is far superior to the usual psychotherapeutic schedule of short-time appointments.

The final chapter presents the implications for society of perinatal and transpersonal therapy, and draws on the writings of Lloyd de Mause. To overt future holocausts, the public must be trained, Grof warns, to recognise perinatal distress in its political leaders. When Hitler-types start talking in terms of national 'strangulation' or of the need for 'lebensraum', the public need to be sensitive to the underlying perinatal disturbances. Society must provide safe spaces for the working through of these volcanic feelings.

Grof's book is a well-argued plan that we should complement whatever we are doing to help resolve contemporary global crises with a systematic process of in-depth self-explorations. . "The future of the world", Grof concludes, "depends on the initiative of each of us". However, it seems to me that social inventions are required to apply such therapies quickly enough and on a large enough scale. Perhaps Grof's transformative four-week marathons could be adapted as a gentler TV instructional series, a sort of Open University course, with summer schools and with nationwide networks of therapists as a back-up resource for viewers who get stuck, a Live Aid for the undernourished psyche?

Nicholas Albery

Understanding Personal Relationships: An interdisciplinary approach. Edited by Steven Duck and Daniel Perlman. Sage Publications, 1985. **£25.00**

The Anatomy of Relationships by Michael Argyle and Marika Henderson. Pelican Books, 1985. £3.95

These books set out to give an account of relationships between people at work, in the family and in neighbourhood and community groups. They are based on surveys, questionnaires and studies in psychological laboratories and emphasize objective data. Very little emphasis is given to experience and feelings and to the fact that relationships grow and change. No space is given to techniques for personal development.

Understanding Personal Relationships gives a dozen chapters by various authors on some aspect of relationships; marriage, friendship, communication etc. They keep to the format: eulogize 'research', drop names (a one-line mention of Buber and of Maslow), generalise from measurements of 'self disclosure', 'initiating relationships', 'size of network', etc. Michael Argyle's chapter summarizes some of **The Anatomy of Relationships.** The value of this book is captured in the following

generalisations (backed up by statistical research): "friendship is found in all cultures" (p.8). "Women benefit more than men from social support" (p.31). "Love is a ubiquitous phenomenon" (p.96). "The bonds between parents and children are very long lasting" (p.193). Michael Argyle believes that 'understanding' these conclusions leads to more health and happiness. My guess is that both books are compulsory reading for college students and some trainees on courses with over-defended academic pretensions. Nobody else should read them for fear of dying of boredom. The claim is made in both books that 'social skill training' is related to these banalities yet the authors (who have written about two dozen repetitive books between them) never tell us what their version of this training is.

David Jones

STAYING ALIVE: The Psychology of Human Survival by Roger Walsh, 1985, Shambhala Pubs., 124 pp, (RKP), £6.95

This beautiful book is for all people working for peace within themselves, and for the world. It is written so simply and clearly that it could be, and should be, in all senior school libraries, and used as a basic text for Peace Studies; yet it has comprehensive scholarly references, and (as the author is a Professor of Psychiatry at the University of California), an equally full list of the American addresses for international organizations concerned with peace and other global issues such as ecology, world hunger and population studies.

You may feel that you are already knowledgeable about the book's general thesis that we need to devize global therapies 'to heal a planet' if nuclear global threats are not to succeed in destroying us and our world. However, Roger Walsh's professional analysis in Part I, **'The State of the World'**, and Part 2, **'The State of our Minds'**, provides a new perspective on our **present** catastrophe: the way in which the fear and defensiveness of the world is already affecting our minds.

Walsh shows that we grasp at dogmatic, simplistic answers to our problems and reminds us that 'the tendency of trying to account for complex phenomena by only one or a few factors is called "extravagance" by psychologists and "degeneracy" by mathematicians'. His sympathy with Buddhist teaching leads him to show how such inadequate and thus harmful belief systems have bad consequences, and that we are all tempted by the 'three poison of addiction, aversion and delusion'. Addiction to ideology prevents East and West from being reconciled, and the consequent aversion to those whom we categorize as enemies is also so unrecognized by us that all our thinking is marred by delusion.

These three poisons are also shown to operate in each of us as individuals: in our determination to have our own way, in the fear and distrust we have of those with whom we do not agree, and in our unrealistic self-image. Walsh adds that our dualism feeds these poisons, so that we can only experience ourselves as good and peaceful by contrasting ourselves with the baddies and warmongers. Peace workers particularly can become obsessed with their enemies - Mr. R. and Mrs. T. - so that eventually they suffer from 'psychic numbing' or burn-out.

So Walsh argues that we shall only decrease fear and defensiveness in the world if we reduce our own. Here the Buddhist and Christian views merge, as the philosophy of loving one's enemy and offering him gifts develops. Walsh also has a more stern message: loving 'the other' means 'identifying' with him, praying for him and basing our peace activities on 'maturity' rather than 'inauthenticity' and 'pathology'. 'If our adversaries' dishonesty and unethicality threaten our survival, then obviously it is appropriate to take countermeasures. Unfortunately, what all too often happens is that these countermeasures themselves include unethical methods . . . a vicious cycle of escalating dishonest, unethical behaviour grows out of fear and defensiveness and increases every step of the way'. We become what each imagines the other to be.

How is this cycle to be reversed in ourselves and in the world? Professor Walsh says we have to be prepared always to learn anew, to love afresh: the education of the mind and heart. Sometimes this will mean that we will have to sacrifice or lose part of a previous ideology, although he suggests that this loss, like a bereavement, can itself lead to a transformation of consciousness by which we grow closer to others. Again he uses his professional knowledge to advocate a pluralistic global psychology by which we use the insights of psychoanalysis, the practical methods of social learning, the humanistic understanding of personal and group actualization and the spiritual awareness of religion to develop individual and community lifestyles which encourage rather than threaten our neighbour.

This book raises many questions. How do I differentiate between personal enthusiasms (which may be oppressive to others), and commitments to causes? How can we avoid projecting our sinfulness onto others so that we create out-groups and in-groups? How do we develop, as Walsh suggests, so that the **way** in which we demonstrate our given beliefs at any time, however much they may mature or become stagnant, is itself a good model of those beliefs?

Can we be both **reconcilers** and **mediators** between those in unresolved personal, group and global conflicts, at the same time as we are ourselves active participants? How should the peace movement see its relationship with the police, the government and agents of law and order? How far may it be true that the police have become increasingly hostile because of developing defensiveness to the hostilities they have experienced?

Perhaps the most difficult question of all is one that Walsh does not discuss in depth: how far can defensiveness be good inasmuch as it is a form of loyalty to sacred human values? We think of dissidents in concentration camps and suppressed religious groups, yet also of the political alternative righteousness of those making government policy. And we remember with shame that the worst wars have been those fought under religious banners. What does loving our enemy really mean?

Yvonne Craig